



# TRIBALS' CULTURE IN MAHASWETA DEVI'S THE BOOK OF THE HUNTER

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## ABSTRACT

Exposing the cultural values of the Shabars' and their gradual cultural decline in Mahasweta Devi's *Book of the Hunter* is the nuclear argument of this research article. It also focuses on the socio-cultural aspects of the tribal community in her novel. The position and issues of Shabars tribal community in the sixteenth century is briefly discussed in *The Book of the Hunter*. Mahasweta Devi is trying to reflect the problems of tribal people in the patriarchal society to make them visible to the Universe. Therefore this paper focuses on the lifestyle, culture, and relationship in a happy way instead of thinking the problem as a sad one. An investigation of *The Book of the Hunter* uncovered that Devi has some message for the pursuers. The novel recounts tribal routine life and their tradition of individuals in the woodland and in the towns furthermore of their condition however it surely touches the hearts of the pursuers.

**KEY WORDS:** Socio-cultural, Investigation, Individuals, Tradition, Woodland or Forest.

Mahasweta Devi is known for her social, Economical and Political writings. She has spent over three decades as a political anthropologist investigative journalist and editor of people's Magazine. She wrote for the betterment of Tribal and out-cast communities. She received Jnanpith award in the year 1998. Mahasweta Devi's *The Book of the Hunter* portrays the history of Bengal in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This novel express her indebtedness to Mukundaram, for his inspiring Epic, Abhayamangal, especially the Byadhkanha (*The Book of the Hunter*) section of the epic.

This paper is focusing on exposing the cultural values of the Shabars, and their gradual cultural decline. She uses the Brahman Mukundaram and his wife, and the young Shabars, Phuli and Kalya to showcase the socio-cultural aspects of the Tribal community.

The novel depicts the oral histories of tribes, especially the 'Shabars' community Mahasweta Devi's *The Book of the Hunter* recalls the history of the sixteenth century Bengal that forms the setting of the novel. It is this area of the book on the exists of the seeker tribes that need propelled Devi to compose something like the plight of the present day tribal. That novel starts for a presentation of Mukundaram Chakrabarti a Brahmin and rancher what's more an artist who urged toward circumstances, abandons behind as much territory of root Daminya of the area of Ararha ardor for a superior term. In the new land after guaranteeing status, wealth What's more peace an internal voice that is closer will as much mother's instigates him will provide for vent to as much Innovativeness. But, to very some occasion when he may be ambivalent something like those story that he need should describe what's more precise before long Mukundaram gets propelled by Abhayachandi the goddess of the Shabars, the tribal who live in the forest closer with Ararha. Abhayachandi turns out to be those muse of as much epic Abhayamangal. Devi spins her story around the real formation for as much epic: how the artist hails on another place, also gets will realize the Shabars through their end association for as much wife what's more different parts from claiming as much community, with whom they trade drugs and other woodland items. He takes in from claiming their myths identifying with their root and their occupation likewise hunters.... She makes her story utilizing Mukundaram's epic, her own main hand cooperation with the Shabar group keeping and the compositions of the Shabars themselves in the contemporary times.

This paper focuses on how Mahasweta Devi's *The Book of the Hunter*, explores the cultural values of the Shabars and how they cope with the slow erosion of their way of life, as more and more forest land gets cleared to make way for settlements. It expresses Abhaya culture and Abhayachandi Goddess. She uses the lives of two couples, the Brahman Mukundaram and his wife, and the young Shabars, Phuli and Kalya, to capture the contrasting socio-cultural norms of the rural society of the time. The hunter tribes' refusal to cultivate and settle down is true of surviving forest tribes today also.

Devi's *The Book of the Hunter*, documents the oral histories of the tribal communities before they disappear altogether. The novel deals with a particular tribes called 'Shabars' to portray the condition of all tribal race whose existence is threatened more and more as city people go on recklessly cutting the forests and encroaching the tribal culture. The story tells us of the Shabars culture and their traditions that are so closely and secretly wound up with the forest in which they live and roam. It lets of the banned, complex abode of the goddess Abhaya, of the

gift for chasing that she need provided for them, those laws that she need laid down, and the fact that breaking these laws, furthermore about simple, characteristic method for a group from claiming these forest children. The story is occurred in Ararha town the place the people would united like a crew for their pioneer Danko, who, providing for know as much information should as much daughter, Tejota, need left the town should live in those backwoods with the goal likewise should watchman those Abhayachandi's temple. The Shabar people deference both Danko furthermore as much daughter, those of age Tejoata. The story additionally moves round those relationship and marriage of Tejota's son, Kalya and as much cherished wife Phuli. There would a few other adolescent couples who move around thoughtlessly in the entirety group keeping placing hand around each other's waist, be that no one dares to break the laws provided for eventually Tom's perusing their goddess. Despite at their shamelessness, they are considerably more edified also complex publicizing over we need aid. Their own social codes state that widows can remarry, women's are place honor, and separation may be permitted. They are very strict in their rules regarding nature that they do not kill any animal in the season of mating. However, gradually the settlements from the city brought many changes in their life and this seems to bring ill fortune to their society-indicated by the death of Kalya. And ultimately, to save them from this encroachment they all moved to another forest.

In this novel, most of the events are focuses on tribal culture or the way they live. We find that they have their Abhaya culture and Abhayachandi Goddess and they do everything according to what their culture allows and it is to be noticed that their culture is far more intellectual than ours, the culture of the city people or the elite people. Abhaya is a Sanskrit word meaning "fearlessness." In both Buddhist and Hindu philosophy, the concept of fearlessness is represented by the Abhaya mudra and indicates spiritual power of Yogi that is gesturing the mudra. Whether knowingly or unknowingly or out of their superstition, the religious rituals they do, does not, in any way, break the ecological balance. They follow certain rules or patterns that depicts them as more nature loving. They maintain the balance by killing animals but not beyond a limit. For instance, we find Danko, the leader of the Shabars announcing for limited killing of animals on the occasions of marriage. If every girls father demanded, "Bring me this, bring me that," the forest would be exhausted. They are all Abhaya's creatures – do you want to kill them all in your desperate greed? (113). Danko further says:

So now I'm going to make a rule that only five deerskins may be taken. And one or two wild boars - no one will ever give more than that. You've got a daughter's wedding and she's under Abhaya's protection – what's the point of inviting Ma's curse by killing too many deer, tigers or boars? (66)

However, while killing animals they are also bounded to the rules. They consider that the biggest sin lies in killing a pregnant deer or any other animal in their season of mating, that's why when the king of Dhalhum, wanted hundred skins of male deer for some ceremony. His traders came with a contract to pay for each skin of male deer a rupee coin of pure silver, Kalya drove the traders away as it was "... the time for the deer to mate. Any Shabar who kills a deer during this period would have Abhaya's curse upon him" (81).

These Shabar people do not have any passion for living a luxurious life. They are innocent tribal people living in the close environment of nature, they just enjoy their life in eating, drinking, and merrymaking. They are not mad to participate in

the race for hyper culture. These innocent tribes are untouched by the evil emotions like pride, jealousy, and envy. They are happy enough with a cloth to cover their body, rice to quench their hunger and a mate to pour their emotions on. Money is less valuable for tribals, "They don't know what money is, nor do they see much of it" (102). Kalachanda says:

They don't even know they are poor....they are always happy. They have so many festivals and holidays - both men and women dance and play on little drums. They mind their own business and are perfectly content. The men and women both toil hard....they have a fine life. (49)

The novel also tells about their frankness regarding their customs of marrying, remarrying or choosing a mate "when husband and wife leave each other, they can both remarry. A widow could remarry her late husband's younger brother, or any other man. That was what Abhaya laid down. Give them full liberty and they will honor it absolutely" (120). In an interview with Gabrielle Collu, Mahasweta Devi said in her own words:

I respect the Tribals too much. I respect Indian tribals because they are much more civilized and sophisticated than we are. Their own social codes say widows can remarry, divorce is allowed, men and women can divorce, a woman's place is of honor, there is no one who becomes an orphan because he or she has lost their parents. The community rears them. There are many such laws prove that they were most civilized most sophisticated and they are the people all India has exploited like anything because they are black, because they don't speak the language (147-48).

Thus, these tribal people always suffer from a muted identity we find the reassurance of Abhaya against all fears. She kept all her wild creatures, trees and forest children the Shabars safe in her lap, covered by her sari, but gradually they learnt that "a town had sprung up outside the forest, and that a king had established his capital there"(58). And ultimately, the Shabars had to "hastily abandon this far edge of the town of Ararha, as they had done time and again with other settlements" seeking for "a place where there existed no city, no market, no king or any other caste or tribe, where there were only the forest, water and hills"(). Thus Mahasweta Devi, talking about tribal identity says: "Indian history did not recognize the tribal fights, tribal rebellions. Never recognized them, never wrote about them and never mentioned them." (148).

No, the town and its kin would spread out and the inhabitants at the edge would set their eyes on the others' homes, yards, methods for living and traditions. The younger generation would be influenced. Sana's family had learned to save. This year their rooftop was not made of leaves, but rather of feed. It was a significant occasion to see Shabars abruptly cover mud up their home dividers and painting pictures on them! Their ways were very not quite the same as alternate Shabars. Sana's significant other did not whip her, and Sana had oil in her hair and rice in store. There was no preventing the circumstances from evolving! A Shabar comprehended that the more others infringed, the more his reality would be debilitated. At that point, that was it. He'd get camp, sticks and all, and calling 'Mama, Ma!' go off into the safe house of some virgin forest.

This is not the plight of Shabars alone. Many other tribals in India too face similar challenges. But, how do they sustain their environment is worth mulling over. In *The Book of the Hunter*, Danko Shabar cares for the forest and its resources. He is continually anxious about the dwindling Shabar tribe that value forests. So, his main concern at the outset is to increase the number of the Shabars by giving birth to new generations of Shabars. The forests in which the Shabars live happily and majestically are vanishing. Upholding the tribal beliefs, Devi discloses how Danko hankers for a medicinal herb that would increase his longevity so that he can live longer and give birth to many children and create a Shabar settlement in some Abhaya's jungle. Moreover, Devi also suggests a forestation as one of the strategies to sustain the environment through Danko who is found growing medicinal herbs.

In any case, how far would one be able to take after Danko Shabar's strides truly are to be considered. An investigation of *The Book of the Hunter* uncovered that Mahasweta Devi has some message for the pursuers. Both the woods and the sylvan offspring of the backwoods are influenced by Tribals because of the uncontrolled development of urbanization must be defended. The novel recounts Tribals routine life and their tradition of individuals in the woodland and in the towns furthermore of their condition however it surely touches the hearts of the pursuers. One has a tendency to sympathize with the tribals and feel for them when they abandon the Chandir Bon and go out looking for woodland. The novel not simply changes the states of mind of the general population but rather it additionally changes the pursuers' hearts. It is these individuals with the changed heart who can manage their surroundings furthermore permit the sylvan youngsters to live gently in their flawless surroundings. Ought not one plant at least a tree and figure out how to soak up the feeling of unity that the tribals impart to the woodland and accordingly continue going a green situation for successors. Not only the shabars, many other tribals in India which experiences. In this novel also speaks about how tactfully they are sustaining the worst atmosphere in their reign.

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